From: ehud barak <ehbarak1@gmail.com>
To: Barak Nili Priell <nilipriell@gmail.com>
CC:
Date: Fri, 12/13/2013 10:50:28 PM
Subject: Fwd: Ronen Bergman on how he was (almost) accused of espionage

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Ronen Bergman <ronen@ronenbergman.com>
Date: December 13, 2013 at 14:23:33 GMT+2
To: <ehbarak1@gmail.com>
Subject: Ronen Bergman on how he was (almost) accused of espionage
Reply-To: Ronen Bergman <ronen@ronenbergman.com>

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Chief Of Staff Attempts to Sabotage New Book on Israeli Intelligence

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

About three years ago I received a phone call from a source within the intelligence community, suggesting that I take a long vacation abroad and put the writing of a new Random House book on the history of Israeli intelligence on hold.

"[Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi] Ashkenazi is trying to arrange an investigation against you at the Shin Bet (Israeli Secret domestic intelligence agency) for espionage and treason," he told me. The implications were clear to me - a similar investigation against my colleague Uri Blau of Haaretz just ended after he spent an extended time abroad. Upon his return to Israel he was tried, sentenced to community service and his entire archive, from his entire journalistic career, was destroyed.

It all started few weeks before that, when I was urgently called to meet CoS Ashkenazi closest assistance, Col. Erez Weiner. He wanted to see me to discuss my research of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) of the IDF's Intelligence Directorate, which takes part, inter alia, in the planning of sabotage, abductions and assassinations behind enemy lines.

The research unveiled the actions of an SEO officer was involved in a series of cases of forging

documents, the violation of numerous military commands and regulation, corruption and attempts to use disinformation to defame the Minister of Defence. Further investigation by my colleague Dan Margalit and myself deeply implicated Ashkenazi himself.

In the meeting, his assistant Col. Weiner chose to reveal to me a number of top secret documents dealing with SOE activities, allegedly containing information that puts some distance between his boss Ashkenazi and the affair. The meeting was recorded.

Ashkenazi, still in office at the time, and widely considered a leading Prime Ministerial candidate once he left the army, was apparently very much concerned about the results of our investigation. He wrote in secret to the chief of the Shin Bet and the attorney general, demanding them to open an aggressive probe against me on charges of possessing top secret classified documents, an offence which is part of the crime of "grave espionage" in Israel. His assistant Wiener testified that **I was the one** who brought the top secret documents into that meeting. The tape recording of the meeting was mysteriously misplaced, and was never recovered.

Luckily, this attempt was thwarted by Director of Shin-Bet who doubted Ashkenazi's motives in starting an investigation. However, as long as Israeli law bundles up the leaking of information and the possession of secret documents for journalistic purposes, with providing information to an enemy of the state under the very same clause of "espionage", tying together journalism and high treason, Israeli journalists are under constant threat from those who wish to stop them from exposing scandals, corruption and anti-democratic acts within the security establishment.

Ha'aretz recently published an investigative piece about this very incident, you can read in this link.

I am thankful to them for shedding light on the affair, and hope this serves as a warning sign to everyone who believes in active and effective investigative journalism.

Best to all you from the stormy (yes, we have a real storm) Tel Aviv,

Ronen

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